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S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

At ST. PAUL's, COVENT-GARDEN,

O N

SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 1780.

BY JAMES HOWELL, M. A.

STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD, &c. &c.

“ Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not that ye
come together not for the better, but for the worse.”

I COR. xi, 17.

Οὐ Χρη Παννυκίου Εὐδελι*

HOMER.

L O N D O N :

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THE R. M. O. N.

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

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TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE CITIES OF
LONDON AND WESTMINSTER,
THIS DISCOURSE
CONTAINING,
AT THIS IMPORTANT CRISIS,
MOST SERIOUS AND SEASONABLE ADVICE,
IS OFFERED
BY THE AUTHOR.

Entered in the Hall-book of the
Company of Stationers, London,
June 25, 1780

The EDITOR acknowledges two
short quotations from the Bishop of
Chester and of Dr. Franklyn, pro-
perly distinguished, but is not con-
scious of any other, except from the
Holy Scriptures themselves.

Ep. Rom. xiii. 11.

*And that knowing the time, that now it is
high time to awake out of sleep.*

THE Apostle St. Paul, in the chapter from whence the text is taken, lays down many excellent precepts, deduced principally from the Decalogue contained in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy; the due observance whereof he enforces with strong conclusions, and the most persuasive arguments to a godly and religious life; resolving the whole of what had been offered into the Love of God and of our neighbour.

Owe no man any thing, saith he, but to love one another, for he that loveth hath fulfilled the law. For this, "Thou shalt not
" commit adultery——Thou shalt not kill;
" Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear
" false witness; Thou shalt not covet; and if
A " there

“ there be any other commandment, it is
 “ briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou
 “ shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love
 “ worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore
 “ love is the fulfilling of the law.” But the
 most powerful argument employed by the
 Apostle, seems to arise from the necessity of
 the thing itself; namely, that there was little
 time left for repentance, and even for that
 repentance, whenever attempted, no place
 left—None for pardon left?—None left but
 by a thorough reformation!

Yet a sudden and entire conversion of man-
 ners is a consummation, rather devoutly to be
 wished for than expected: least of all is a
 violent and preposterous change from a life
 of gaiety and dissipation, by some considered to
 be innocent, and perhaps not always abso-
 lutely criminal to the bigotry of Enthusiasm
 on the one hand, or the gloomy melancholy
 of Despair on the other, demanded or intended
 by the Apostle.—No! the genius of Chris-
 tianity abhors either extreme; religion exacts
 no such severe compliances from us; her yoke
 is easy, and her burthen light; “ Her ways are
 “ ways

“ ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are
“ peace.”

Come unto me, saith our blessed Saviour, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: come unto me, oppressed with the weight of human infirmity, and languishing under the burden of your sins, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; where it may be observed, that it is unto Christ himself, and neither unto his Apostles nor Ministers, that we are directed to apply for pardon and remission of our sins: Come ye unto the fountain of living waters, and drink from the rock of Christ; “ Incline your ear, and your soul shall live, “ and I will make an everlasting covenant “ with you, even the sure mercies of David:” Nor need the wretched offender man, like the impotent person at the pool of Bethesda, consume with the regret of seeing others perpetually stepping forward, and depriving him of the streams of that mercy which his infirmity prevented him the enjoyment of.—No! The bounties of Providence are no longer scantily exhibited to mankind by the partial attendance of an angel--and even that peculiarity may fairly be

be considered as a preparation only, an opportunity embraced by the Messiah, of proving by a public and incontestible miracle, that He was indeed sent from God;—the hope and consolation of Israel; the Lamb of God that was to come into the world.—The paralytic, without the aid of the waters, is instantaneously restored, “Behold thou art made whole.” The pool is no longer agitated; the troubled waves subside; the blessing becomes universal; the access to the streams of health, no longer rugged, is attainable by all. For the rock from whence they flowed is Christ. Just, indeed, and reasonable is the requisite qualification, mild and benevolent is the invitation of our blessed Lord and Saviour; it is comprized in two words only—“Repent and be forgiven.” Then shall your light spring forth as the morning, and your righteous dealing as the noon-day. The iniquities that ye have committed shall not be remembered, neither shall the wicked fall in the day that he turneth from his wickedness:—the sacrifice of a meek and quiet spirit, in the sight of God, of great price, is the only return expected at our hands, and the love shewn by

us to our neighbour the pledge of our possessing that spirit :—to adorn ourselves where-with, let us address the Throne of Grace, by a sincere and humble confession, made rather unto Almighty God, who seeth in secret, and knoweth the innermost recesses of the heart, than unto man often equally criminal with ourselves; and our heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, will, in his own good and appointed time, reward us openly. A sincere repentance for the past, and firm real resolutions of amendment in future, are the conditions on man's part; and, surely, no one can say, that the ways of God are not equal, or pronounce the terms severe.—Let the wicked man forsake his way, saith the Prophet, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for He will abundantly pardon. “ Cast away, therefore, “ the works of darkness, and put upon you the “ armour of light, then though your sins be “ as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, “ though they be as crimson, they shall be- “ come as wool.”

The uncertainty of human life, and the danger arising from thence of our having no time to effect a reformation, is another argument equally powerful with that drawn from the unexpected coming of Christ, to judge both the quick and dead, to induce us to “awaken from sleep, and endeavour to re- deem the time because the days are evil.” But the most serious reflection, the most alarming consideration of all, offers itself from the importance of the object enforcing the duty of awakening from sleep, in order that we may work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.—The preservation of our own immortal souls, and the care of those committed to our charge, is undoubtedly a concern by no means to be trifled with.—Let the gay, the young, the healthy, the rich, the dissipated, they who smile upon the world, and the world on them, think as they please, and act conformably as they think; let them deride those precepts of Christianity which they have not fortitude to practise, and let them scoff at that reformation as pretended, which being yet in its infancy they are not, cannot be enabled to decide upon, and pronounce insincere.

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Let them, if they condemn all natural and revealed religion, go on to add sin to sin, to draw impiety with cords of vanity, and iniquity, as it were, with a cart-rope; let them, if they flatter themselves that they can hide their counsel from the Lord, and say, who seeth us? And who knoweth? “ *Rise up* “ *early in the morning and continue unto* “ *night, till wine inflame them.* If they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands, the harp and the viol, the tabret, pipe, and wine, may still be in their feasts. Enjoyments these! it must be acknowledged, when restrained by moderation, in themselves innocent, given us by an all-wise and beneficent Creator, to cheer us through this valley of the shadow of death” *—to enliven the scene—to make glad the heart of man, and to give him a cheerful countenance, capable of being applied to the service of religion, and then only do they tend to criminate, when liberty becomes licentiousness, and they are indulged in to a profligate and vicious excess.

Let them, to the younger part of my auditory I address myself, if deaf to every remonstrance

* Dr. Porteous, Bishop of Chester.

france of reason or religion, rejoice in their youth, and let their heart cheer them, in the days of their youth, and let them walk in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes, but let them understand this awful and important truth, that if there be an hereafter—If, this life ended, the soul shall not expire, but the spirit return to God who gave it—If, at the resurrection of the just, it shall re-animate this our clay, “*and bone shall know each kindred bone again*”—If we shall not all sleep, but all be changed? If we are, indeed, to rise again, with our own bodies, and give an account of our own works—Then, undoubtedly, for all these things, for these sins, unrepented of, God will bring us into judgment, *i. e.* unless we speedily reform, into condemnation.

But it may be asked, who art thou, O man, who judgest another, judgest not thou thyself? Thou that preachest to another, thou shalt not not kill, dost thou slay, &c.—Thou hypocrite! pluck first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

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The answer is at hand—we are men of like passions with yourselves; if we say, therefore, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. The Lord is no respecter of persons, as with the people, so with the Priest, &c. The soul that sinneth, it shall die—for to whom much hath been given, of him much more will be required.—The Prophet Ezekiel hath set this matter in the clearest light, with a boldness becoming the servant of the Most High God, peculiar, indeed, to the oriental writers, he hath introduced the first Person, in the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, complaining of the infidelity of his shepherds. Son of man, prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, woe be unto the shepherds that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, but with force and cruelty have

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ye ruled them. Therefore, hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hands. The passage contains a most severe denunciation against a careless, a supine, or an improvident Ministry; and the context, which we shall hereafter examine, will exhibit a more important sense, than the words at first sight may seem to convey.

But why, of your own selves, judge ye not that which is right? Why say ye unto the Prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits? And why, by your lives, do ye convince us, that ye love to have it so?

Consider the situation we are in, the relation we bear unto you; if he that shall haply be the means of saving a sinner from the error of his way, shall, in consequence thereof, cover the multitude of his own sins, and shine as the stars in the firmament, of how much importance is it to us to be instant in season and out of season, to exhort,
to

to admonish, to reprove. Wherefore, I beseech you, brethren, join not yourselves with them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the pure doctrine which ye have learned, but rather avoid them. *St. Paul*, 16, 17. The declaration elsewhere delivered by the Prophet, and before alluded to, at the same time that it sufficiently alarms the supine and indolent, conveys the most spirited and beautiful instruction, “ Son of
 “ Man, I have set thee a watchman to the
 “ House of Israel, therefore hear the word of
 “ the Lord at my mouth, and give them
 “ warning from me, when I say unto the
 “ wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou
 “ gavest him not warning, nor speakest to
 “ warn the wicked, from his wicked way, to
 “ save his life, the same wicked man shall
 “ die in his iniquity, but his blood will I
 “ require at thine hand. Yet, if thou warn
 “ the wicked, and he turn not from his
 “ wickedness, he shall die in his iniquity,
 “ but thou hast delivered thine own soul.”
 Again, “ When a righteous man doth turn
 “ from his righteousness and commits iniqui-
 “ ty, because thou hast not given him warn-
 ing,

“ ing, he shall die in his sin, but his blood
 “ will I require at thy hand.—Nevertheless, if
 “ thou warn the righteous that he sin not, and
 “ he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because
 “ thou hast warned him, also thou hast deliver-
 “ ed thine own soul.”

Since then the danger is so great, and the deposit so truly valuable, even the safety of our immortal souls, we must allow that it highly concerns us to awake from asleep, now in the time of this mortal life, wherein our Lord Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility—that, at the last day, when he shall come again, in glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and dead, we may be found an acceptable people in his sight, and enter into the joy of our Lord.

If ever exhortation was profitable, it must be acknowledged that it is now in season—when God’s judgments are in the world, the inhabitants thereof, it is said, will learn righteousness; at a time, therefore, when the sins of the people are gone up to Heaven for vengeance, when liberty is made a cloak
 for

for maliciousness, and the insolence of rebellion is got beyond all restraint of law or of authority, when the finger of God is manifestly visible, and the iniquity of the parent is punished in the severest manner, by the deliberate yet unexpected * disobedience of the aspiring offspring. At a time when we are threatened with powerful invasions from abroad, alarmed by domestic faction, and there is war, the worst of war, that raised by civil dissension, even in our very gates, it is meet and right for the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, to weep between the porch and

* The revolt of the Colonies, and their arming to assert the rights of independence, must have been many years preconcerting, in proportion as they gradually felt their own strength and consequence, and the share they had in the successes of the last war. It may be observed, however, without presuming to fix blame on any one man or set of men in particular, that many successive Administrations paid little or no attention to the intimations received from Governor Sir Francis Bernard and his successors, for it is now agreed on all hands, that had half the naval and military force at present in America been sent out in the first place, the attempt must have been totally ineffectual, and America must have found herself in the situation Ireland hath been in since the days of Tyrone; whereas she is now deprived of that patronage which civilized her people, encouraged her manufactures, and of that freedom of commerce which Ireland, at this time, enjoys under the mildness and equity of the present reign.

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the altar, and to say, " Spare thy people, O Lord, and let not thine heritage be brought to confusion." If ever unanimity, if ever rectitude of council, if ever fortitude and perseverance, if ever brotherly love, mutual forbearance and Christian charity were acceptable, they are now expedient; wherefore, laying aside malice and every partial self-interested concern, let every man speak truth with his neighbour. Let us act as though influenced by one and the same spirit; the spirit of unity and concord; endeavouring to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace: let us no longer tumultuously gather together, to the violation of civil and religious liberty, nor furiously destroy each other; let the father no longer rise up against the son, nor the son against the father, but let us rather turn our arms with united and accumulated vengeance on our common enemies; let us endeavour to procure, by patient and submissive representation, redress for real or fancied grievances; let us eschew evil, learn to do good, seek peace and ensue it. And may the God of patience and consolation grant us to be like minded, one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, that we may, with one mind
and

and one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Let a love for our country, manifested by a dutiful obedience to the Sovereign, and those in authority under him, succeed to the love of God, and of our neighbour! Succeed did I say? In reality they are united.

Let us add to our Faith, Virtue; to our Virtue, Knowledge; to our Knowledge, Temperance; to our Temperance, Brotherly Love; to our Brotherly Love, Charity; the very bond of peace, and of all Christian virtues.—That evangelical grace, which, according to St. Paul's definition, demonstrates itself not in the mere act of alms-giving, though this be a virtue at all times to be recommended—not in the powers of eloquence, though a man speak with the tongues of men, or of angels—not in acts of generosity alone, though we redeem the life of another at the hazard of our own: but it is that living principle which operating by an universal philanthropy, preserves the faith of nations, protects the rights of individuals,

duals, and gently binding men of different climes, temper, language, complection, and religion, by the tender links of benevolence and compassion, endears them to society, serves to humanize mankind, and enables every man to sit down in peace and safety, without fear or molestation, under his own vine.

In short, it is that commandment, which, as the Apostle well observes, comprehending all the rest, speaks this expressive language to the soul: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law; and that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

'To the arguments already delivered by the Apostle, to induce us to exert ourselves, and to lay aside the sin that doth so easily beset us; because the night was far spent, and the day, the great and awful day of judgment was at hand

hand. He adds this powerful and persuasive conclusion, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed;" that is, it more highly concerns us now, after the first coming of our Saviour, to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because we have a nearer prospect of the second Advent; forasmuch as the day and hour thereof, continually draweth still more nigh; or it may be understood, that now is our salvation nearer than when in the loins of the Patriarchs our fathers we believed only, forasmuch, as certainty is preferable to expectation; and faith being the evidence of things not seen, is now lost in positive demonstration and enjoyment:—Now they saw as through a glass, darkly, comprehending only the promised blessing by types and signs, **THE DIM LIGHT OF PROPHEPIC REVELATION**: but we, on whom the ends of the world are come, see face to face.—Our Saviour hath * already appeared in the flesh;—the prophecies † attending his coming have been accomplished, and therefore

* Vide Josephus, and Bishop of Rochester's Cloud of Witnesses.

† Newton on the Prophecies.

acquire the authority of proofs;—the difficulties * attending seeming contradictory passages of Holy Writ are cleared up, and a set of precepts given us so easy to the comprehension, so well adapted to the meanest capacity, that he who runs may read; and of such general service to the whole human race in the observance, that “WHILE THEY MAKE US
“HAPPY HERE in the discharge of them, secure to us,” as the ingenious author † of those elegant discourses on the relative duties hath well observed, “OUR OWN IMMORTAL AND
“EVERLASTING HAPPINESS HEREAFTER.” The love of God and of our neighbour being the sum and substance of the whole of the evangelical dispensation, it is consequently as much the interest as the duty of mankind to practise the precepts of the Gospel, nothing else being intended or comprehended therein, save this emphatic sentence, “Thou shalt love thy
“neighbour as thyself.” For this is the law and the prophets!—Seeing then, brethren, that these things are so, how shall we escape if we

* Clarke’s Harmony of the Gospel. Prideaux Connection of the Old and New Testament.

† Dr. Franklyn’s Introductory Sermon, page 10, 12mo. edit.

neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken of by our Lord Jesus Christ? who having led captivity captive, ascended up on high, after he had bequeathed peace upon earth, and good-will towards men, that good-will, or social charity, which was to be at once the admiration of a heathen world, and the test to future ages of their being his disciples. In order, therefore, to perpetuate these his blessings to mankind, he instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death and passion: and lest the memorial of these his abundant kindnesses might in process of time be lost;—that the observance of these hallowed ceremonies, purchased by his blood, might continually be enforced upon mankind, he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets; and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints,—for the work of the Ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ, that is the Church. And because we see those things which the Prophets desired in vain to see, and hear those things which they could not hear; let us hold fast the profession of our faith

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WITHOUT WAVERING; let us, having this ministry, faint not, but renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, " Let us commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the fight " of God; for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants, for his sake.

And happy is it for us that the same Apostle, who admonisheth us that the day and hour of the Lord is at hand, who exhorts us with so much earnestness to awake from sleep, because the night of sin was far spent, and the day of salvation or condemnation near, hath also prescribed the means of our obtaining that salvation, and preventing the shades of night from ever overtaking us. If God then graciously prescribe the means, let not man neglect the pursuit of them; " Let " him apply to this Sun of Righteousness, " who is arisen with healing under his wings," enlist under his banner, that, under his protection we may be safe and happy. If our heavenly Father, by his Prophets and Ministers, condescends to regard his children, let them not be wanting to themselves, nor let them,

them, with the foolish virgins, while the
 Bridegroom tarrieth, slumber and sleep. Let
 no man say of those, whom the Day Spring
 from on high hath visited, " I went by the
 " field of the slothful, and by the vineyard
 " of the man void of understanding ; and lo !
 " it was grown all over with thorns, and
 " nettles had covered the face thereof, and
 " the stone wall thereof was broken down.
 " Then I saw and considered it well, I looked
 " upon it and received instruction ; yet a little
 " more sleep and a little more slumber, a
 " little more folding of the hands to sleep,
 " had been the prayer and practice of the in-
 " dolent," and the consequence was such
 as might have been expected from such a
 conduct : " So shall thy poverty come upon
 " thee as one that travaileth, and thy want
 " as an armed man." The comment is plain
 and obvious—thus lost unto religion, thus
 neglected, and void of cultivation, is the
 heart of a man absorbed in lethargy and
 secure in sin, who, because judgment is not
 speedily executed against an evil work, thinks
 not of repentance nor reformation ; who, in
 the absence of his Lord, and in the situation

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of the fatigued disciples, cannot be prevailed upon to watch even one hour. Overshadowed with the veil of the flesh, and fainting under the weight of human transgression, they awakened not from their slumber, nor thought of their Lord's approach! Alas! how unfit must that disciple be to partake of those blessings which Christ hath promised, who will not patiently and faithfully expect his coming?—If we fear God, or honour religion, if we give any credit to the precepts of the Gospel, let us be at least attentive to the duties of Christianity!

Let us watch and pray that we enter not into temptation, and that our Lord, when he cometh, may find us ready. Let us not permit the least awakening call unto repentance to pass unnoticed, because one opportunity lost, this our short day past, an everlasting night may overtake us, and it will be too

*Soles occidere et redire possint
Nobis quum semel occidit brevis lux
Nox est perpetua una dormienda. CATULLUS.
In the grave there is no repentance.*

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late to call Lord! Lord! when we shall be told he knows us not.

But let us never so fatally deceive ourselves, as to think THAT A REGULAR ATTENDANCE ON CERTAIN STATED AND UNSEASONABLE HOURS OF WORSHIP, WHEN NATURE AND INDUSTRY REQUIRE REPOSE, WILL AVAIL US IN THE DAY OF THE LORD; the sacrifice of the heart*, rather than the mere external devotion of the lips, he requireth at our hands:—And since it is evident, that sooner or later the sleep of death must overtake every one of us, let us labour to cast off the works of darkness, that spiritual sleep, and in the mean time, by studying to be quiet and diligently minding our own business, as becometh good citizens, make our peace with an offended Creator, that conscience, or at least repentance, may witness for us at the hour of death and in the day of judgment; let all hatred and malice be put away far from us, with evil speaking; and may the God of hope fill us with all joy and hope in believing, that

* My Son, give me thy heart.

we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. May we therefore seriously and carefully endeavour to follow the advice of the Apostle, and to walk honestly as in the day, "NOT IN RIOTING AND DRUNKENNESS, NOT IN CHAMBERING AND WANTONNESS, NOT IN STRIFE AND ENVYING;" that in the last day, when Christ shall come again in glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost now and ever. Amen and Amen.

